



Middlebury

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[1821] Sermon

Such is the situation of man, and such his inclination to err; that frequent deflection is absolutely necessary, to his progressive happenings in life, and his eternal felicity beyond this precious existence. Every step, he takes, every imployment [sic], he pursues should first be attentively examined by a sedate and reflecting mind; or he will most certainly lose his object, and experience the pangs of cruel disappointment. During the period of infancy, while the mind is incapable of reflection, and of choosing the course, which leads to happiness and honour, parental instructions or experienced teachers are of inconceivable importance. They can instil unto the immature mind the principles of virtue, which, when once embraced serve as effectual barriers against vice, and all those follies, which are incident to man. But it is not unfrequently the case, that individuals when left to themselves, are regardless of their own interest, and by repeated inconsiderate acts plunge themselves into the vortex of misery and sorrow. Thousands have lamented, too late, their wilful inconsideration, and except at the retrospection of their own extreme folly, when their condition was desperate. He cannot suppose that there ever was a man, who was hurried on by his thirst of revenge to take the life of his foe, but have occasion to condemn his precipitant rashness, ipon due reflection. Had he suitably considered the evil effects of such a crime in a moment when his passions were undisturbed, and prejudice yielded to reason, he might have saved himself from many unavailing sighs and fruitless lamentations. It is inconsideration, that dangerous foe to man, which veils the world in mourning and brings multitudes to a miserable and untimely grave.

The real advantage of ever keeping the mind in a reflecting, and serious state is of incalculable importance in every pursuit of life. It strengthens the memory, removes the obstacles to happiness, and greatly improves & enriches the understanding. The attention is taken from these trifling, and frequently criminal subjects, which are too apt to occupy the mind and render it entirely unfruitful. Every object in nature presents a rich source of reflection from which lessons of useful instruction may be acquired. It is with no inconsiderable pleasure that we examine the works of creation and trace effects to their respective causes, and these causes to the great first mover of all things. When we turn our attention from surrounding objects and views the wonderful display of infinite wisdom and power in the existence and revolutions of innumerable worlds all revolving in

their respective orbits, we are lost in admiration and pleasure. But when we open the sacred oracles, the field of meditation is widely extended and the range of our ideas greatly enlarged. There are revealed the wonders of redemption, which will ever employ the minds of Angels, and fill them with increasing astonishment. There we see man's immortality in its proper view: We see the day of general judgement; & the glory of the new Jerusalem: subjects particularly interesting to man, which should ever be retained in memory and regulate all his actions. We could scarce suppose it possible, that subjects of such a nature so intimately connected with our present and future welfare, would be treated with such indifference.

But the Christian enters deeply into these things and drives all his support from those living truths. When he reflects upon the divine government extending from the fall of empires to the flying of a note in the air his heart is inflamed with sacred love and his happiness is rendered more complete. He views the finger of God in every event, from the destruction of Kingdoms to the bursting of a bubble. However mysterious and incomprehensible the divine plans may appear, yet it is ~~an~~ consoling reflection that a Being of infinite wisdom directs & disposes of every thing in such a manner as to produce the greatest possible good.

In futurity we may rationally conclude that reflection will give additional reason for sacred pleasure in every sanctified beast, and raise still higher their songs of adoration and praise. Reflecting upon the pit from whence he was saved, by the blood of the covenant his heart will swell with gratitude & love for the excellent display of redeeming grace.

Levi Parsons